



Recalculating



**NAVIGATE YOUR CAREER THROUGH
THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK**

Lindsey Pollak

Some names and identifying details have been
changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

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Adjust Your Mindset

**Approach Recalculation with a Positive Attitude—
and a Little Less Instagram**

Exercise: Hey Jealousy!

I was introduced to a version of this exercise by my first-ever life and career coach, Jennifer Macaluso-Gilmore. The instructions are to list ten people whose careers you admire in some way. Then fill out the questions provided for each person to turn your envy into a catalyst for action. (Bonus points if you recognize the Gen X song referenced in this exercise title . . .)

Name of person you envy	What you most envy about this person	Brainstorm one or more steps you can take to develop the same skills or qualities this person has
<i>Carla Harris, author, speaker, singer, and managing partner at Morgan Stanley</i>	<i>She is the best public speaker I've ever witnessed</i>	<p><i>1. I can study videos of her speeches to observe her delivery, pacing, and storytelling and apply it to my own speeches.</i></p> <p><i>2. I can reach out and verbalize my admiration for her; then ask if she can share some advice or assess a short video of my speaking if she is willing.</i></p>
1.		
2.		
3.		

4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

9.		
10.		

Exercise: Adopt a Growth Mindset

Developing a growth mindset requires not just a change in attitude but also a change in your daily habits. What takes place in your mindset must translate into action.

Complete this exercise for as many skills as you'd like to improve, especially for any perceived deficiencies you feel are holding you back from achieving your career goals.

1. Challenge a fixed mindset thought by adding the word "yet" to the end of it. _____

2. Brainstorm a variety of actions that can help you to learn, grow, or improve. _____

3. Pick the easiest or most appealing action to start with. Mark that action—or several elements of it—in your calendar to track your progress. _____

Exercise: Build a Self-Care Practice

To support your self-care efforts, here are a wide variety of practices to test out and keep in your toolkit during your recalculation and whenever you are feeling overwhelmed throughout your career journey. I encourage you to try an action from this list that you've never considered before:

- ☐ Take five deep breaths
- ☐ Take a nap or go to bed an hour earlier than usual
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Take a movement class like yoga, dance, Pilates, or martial arts
- ☐ Listen to music
- ☐ Play a video game
- ☐ Work on a crossword puzzle, word search, or Sudoku
- ☐ Watch a TV show or movie
- ☐ Play with a pet
- ☐ Pursue a hobby you loved as a kid, like building LEGO or doing a jigsaw puzzle
- ☐ Garden, birdwatch, hike, fly a kite, or just spend time in nature

- ☐ Meditate (apps like Calm and Headspace provide guided meditations)
- ☐ Read a book
- ☐ Call a friend
- ☐ Cook or bake
- ☐ Get or give yourself a manicure or pedicure
- ☐ Visit a museum or tour one online
- ☐ Draw, color, or paint
- ☐ Play solitaire on the computer or with an actual deck of cards
- ☐ Pray or attend a religious service
- ☐ Other: _____



Forge Your New Path

**Prepare for Recalculation by Clarifying
Your Goals, Assessing Your Strengths
and Educational Credentials, and Better
Managing Your Time and Energy**

Exercise: Enter Your Destination

Use this space to envision your dream career outcome. Whether it's a short-term or long-term goal, whether you have a vague concept or know exactly what you want, put it in writing here. If you need some inspiration, revisit the profiles of people you envied in the previous chapter. You can use this space to write a story, a stream-of-consciousness paragraph, or even just a list of bullet points containing random elements you'd like your next career opportunity to have. The important thing is to clarify your goal and keep this destination in mind over the course of this book and beyond.

Exercise: Momentum Builders

Here is a list of small actions that can help you build momentum in a variety of ways, depending on your unique goals. Come back to this list whenever you feel overwhelmed by challenges or frustrations on your recalculation path and you need to kick-start your momentum again. And there is no reason to stop these career-building actions even after you achieve your current goal. Imagine where you can end up if you just take one little action every single day, now and forever?

- ☐ Improve one sentence on your LinkedIn profile.
- ☐ Add one new key word to your résumé that you've noticed in job descriptions that appeal to you.
- ☐ Attend one webinar on job hunting, entrepreneurship, or any professional topic that appeals to you.
- ☐ Declutter one item from your workspace or background to create a more professional environment for video calls and virtual meetings and interviews.
- ☐ Listen to one podcast episode related to your current industry or an industry you'd like to work in.
- ☐ Research a list of most common job interview questions and draft your answer to one of them.
- ☐ Expand your distance search criteria on a jobs site by a five-mile radius.
- ☐ Follow one potential employer or client on Twitter or LinkedIn.
- ☐ Google and read one article or watch one TikTok on how to perform well in a job interview or salary negotiation.
- ☐ Text three friends to ask how they landed their most recent

job or promotion or had a success in their business.

- ☐ Connect with three former classmates or colleagues on LinkedIn.
 - ☐ Volunteer one hour of time, virtually or in person, to a cause that is important to you.
 - ☐ Request to join one LinkedIn or Facebook group in your industry or desired industry.
 - ☐ Sign up for one new industry- or career-related e-newsletter.
 - ☐ Reach out to one person you know professionally and ask if you can do anything to support them.
 - ☐ Respond to a blog or LinkedIn post by a leader in an organization or industry that interests you.
 - ☐ Send a thank-you note or email to someone who has supported you.
-



Your Career Story

Clarify Your Personal Brand and “Soft” and “Hard” Skills, and Communicate Your Story Through Your Résumé, Cover Letters, LinkedIn, and Other Social Media

Exercise: Define Your Key Personal Brand Attributes

Here is a simple exercise to help you attain the personal brand you want to have by defining the “soft skills,” or personal qualities, you want to be known for. The exercise consists of three questions:

What Attributes Are You Currently Known For?

If you were to poll everyone who knows you today as a student or professional, what three personal attributes or qualities would most commonly be used to describe you? Remember that the question is not how you would describe yourself (which differentiates this exercise from a self-assessment test) but how you think others would describe you.

Examples: analytical, compassionate, creative, decisive, assertive, diligent, good communicator, ethical, team player, leader, attentive to detail, problem solver, friendly, humble, trustworthy, inquisitive, empathetic

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What Personal Attributes Do You Aspire to Be Known For?

In the ideal future you wrote out at the beginning of Chapter Two, where you've achieved a career that makes you happy and fulfilled, what three words would your professional contacts use to describe you? In other words, what is your aspirational personal brand? Perhaps there is some crossover in your words from the previous list, or maybe you have a vision of being perceived with completely different words. There are no wrong answers.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What Regular Habits Will You Build to Advance from Your First List to Your Second One?

Here's where the rubber meets the road. What are you going to do to advance yourself from the reputation you have now to the reputation you want to have? You can't build or enhance your personal brand by thinking really hard. You have to build *habits* that demonstrate these qualities to others on a regular basis.

Take some time here to list three to five regular habits you can build to demonstrate the qualities you aspire to be part of your personal brand. Remember the growth mindset exercise in Chapter One: you can get better at anything if you put in the time and effort.

Examples:

Aspirational brand: leader, detail oriented, excellent public speaker

- To build my brand as a leader, I will listen to one podcast episode a week on a leadership topic.
- To demonstrate that I am detail oriented, I will make it a habit to review and spell-check every email before I press “send.”
- To demonstrate that I am serious about improving my skills as a presenter and public speaker, I will attend a monthly Toastmasters International meeting in person or online.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Exercise: Cast the Widest Net Possible

Taking into account your soft skills, hard skills, and experiences, start to list all of the job functions, industries, projects, courses, and career-related activities that could be part of your recalculation. In *Getting from College to Career*, I referred to this as creating a Really Big List, and it's a great brainstorming technique for any stage of your career.

What are ALL the ways you can advance your career right now toward your desired destination based on the experiences you've had and your unique career story? This might include a combination of full-time job titles, part-time job opportunities, freelancing, entrepreneurship, or anything else you can think of. Don't limit yourself in any way. Just get all of these potential ideas out of your head and onto a document, using the grid below, a blank page from a journal or notebook, a Google Doc, a note in your phone, or any other format that will be easy for you to access and add to whenever you have a new idea. And, as it's likely you'll find yourself in a transition again at some point, the work you do now can guide you in the future as well.

Write down each soft skill, hard skill, and experience in your professional or personal history, then brainstorm all of the potential career options related to that skill or experience. Again, there are no wrong or outrageous answers, and don't worry right now about whether you would need an additional degree or credentials; just try to come up with as comprehensive a list as you can. Internet searches and group texts to friends asking for ideas are strongly encouraged!

Existing Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and/or Experience	Potential Related Opportunities
<i>After-school babysitter</i>	<i>Full-time nanny, day-care-center owner or employee, teacher, child psychologist, social worker, guidance counselor, toy store or children's retail owner or employee, tutor, managing a babysitting service or website, working at an after-school program, working at a museum on children's programming, working at a child-focused nonprofit, writer for parenting or childcare website</i>



Networking in the “New Normal”

**Tap the Power of Relationships by
Building, Maintaining, and Leveraging Your
Contacts Both in Person and Virtually**

Exercise: You Know More People Than You Think

Take some time to identify the people you know. Open up a Word doc or a notes app or grab a pen and paper, then challenge yourself to write the longest list you can come up with. Take a look at your phone contacts, your social media connections, and your old address books. The goal is not to judge how “connected” or “helpful” any of these people might be to you; just make a big list. Consider including:

- Family members
- Friends
- Neighbors
- People you frequently interact with through social media sites, listservs, discussion boards, or video games
- Parents of your child(ren)’s friends
- Your friends’ parents and siblings

- Current and former colleagues from every job, internship, and/or volunteering position you've ever had
- Former classmates, teachers, professors, guidance counselors, sports coaches
- Fellow members of religious organizations
- Fellow members of professional associations, charitable organizations, fraternities, or sororities
- Local business owners
- People you regularly run into at the gym, grocery store, community center, hair salon, or elsewhere

Next, make a separate list of all the organizations and institutions you're affiliated with. Consider people who share these affiliations with you to be members of your extended network. They are more likely than a complete stranger to answer your email, take your call, or accept your LinkedIn request if you mention the connection. Consider including:

- Towns or neighborhoods you've lived in
- Schools that you or anyone in your immediate family have attended
- Organizations where you've worked full- and part-time
- Clubs, volunteer organizations, professional associations, fraternities, or sororities that you've been a member of
- Religious institutions where you've worshipped

It doesn't matter if you ended up listing 15 people and organizations, or 150, or 1,500. What matters is that you have a starting point. Try sharing your lists with a significant other, parent, or

close friend; maybe they'll remind you of people or organizations you may have left off. Then, keep this list handy as you work through the rest of this chapter and book.

Exercise: Build Your Personal Advisory Board

List the people—the founding members of your personal advisory board—to whom you'll turn for advice and guidance on your recalculation journey and beyond. These people don't have to "accept" their nomination or even necessarily know that you consider them advisory board members. The goal is to create a diverse list of people to help support, motivate, and guide you when you need various forms of support.

Consider friends, family members, former bosses and colleagues, former teachers, professors, and coaches, among others. Consider people of different races, ethnicities, generations, sexual orientations, personality types, geographic regions, industries, and job functions. The more diverse group of people you can tap for advice and support, the more innovative your decisions and actions will be.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Once you've crafted your advisory board, take a moment to think about whose advisory boards *you* might be part of. Remember, as always, to give as much as you want to receive.



Ace the Job Search

**Build Your Expertise in Twenty-First-Century
Job Hunting, from Job Boards to Employer
Research to Virtual Interviewing to
Embracing Imperfect Pancakes**

Exercise: Create a Career Recalculation Newsfeed

I recommend that you use Twitter—though LinkedIn also works—to set up a personalized newsfeed of employers, industries, influencers, and topics related to your career recalculation goals. Twitter’s List feature allows you to create a feed that is separate from any other accounts you follow on the platform. If you’ve never used Twitter before, you can quickly set up an account using the app or desktop version. You don’t even have to use your real name or post a single tweet if you don’t want to. This exercise is just about the information you will consume.

Begin by following every potential employer that interests you even a little bit. Then follow any professionals or leaders at those employers or in your desired field. Then follow any professional associations or industry publications related to the field. Once you’ve followed everyone and everything you can think of, you can do what I call “going down the rabbit hole” and scan

through the lists of accounts that each organization or person in your newsfeed is following. This will alert you to new organizations and people you didn't even know about. Follow the ones that appeal to you. I encourage you to stretch yourself and follow at least fifty to one hundred accounts in total.

Once you've set up your feed, spend five to ten minutes each morning scrolling through it, just as you might start your day by scanning through the general news headlines. You don't have to read every word of every post, but you can look for trends and hot topics. Are there current industry issues being debated? What jargon and acronyms are used that you should be familiar with? Have any important leaders been hired or fired? What jobs are people and organizations posting about? (Many employers have separate Twitter accounts that exist only to post available jobs—you should also follow those if you're not already.) Think of yourself as a fly on the wall in all of these conversations. The best part is that this is all totally free and available 24/7. Companies spend millions of dollars a year on their social media presence; they want you to consume what they post.

When most people think of Twitter, they picture a feed of political tweets, celebrity selfies, or the opinions of friends and colleagues. But Twitter's own cofounder Ev Williams primarily thinks of the platform in the way I describe it: as a news system. "The way we started talking about it was as a real-time information network," he has said. We live in the Information Age, so you need to have as much information as possible to compete for opportunities.

Once you secure a job interview with a particular employer, take two more research actions immediately:

1. Spend at least an hour each day before your interview looking through the employer's website. Visit the press page to read current news, visit the leadership page to familiarize yourself with the names of the top executives, and generally become well versed in the products and services that this employer offers. If they have a company mission statement, commit its key elements to memory.
 2. Set up a Google alert ([google.com/alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts)) with the employer's name. This will ensure that you'll be up-to-date with any media stories about the employer that might arise. Trust me, you don't want to miss a big announcement that takes place the day before your interview!
-

Exercise: The Art of the Trade-Off

Take some time to prioritize various elements of your ideal job and their overall importance to you. This will help you to make potential trade-offs when offers start coming in. Fill out each section of the list below, then rank each factor in order of importance from 1 to 8 (or 9 if you add an "other"), so that 1 is the most important priority in your next job and 8 or 9 is the least important factor and possibly one that you would consider compromising on.

___ **Job Function**

The job function of my next position must include (examples: work I'm passionate about, challenging work, helping people):

___ **Employer/Culture**

The employer of my next job must be (examples: a brand-name company, environmentally friendly, committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion):

___ **Salary**

The salary of my next job must be no less than \$

___ **Benefits**

The benefits offered by my next job must include (examples: health insurance, a 401(k) match, vision and dental, X amount of PTO):

___ **Title**

The title of my next job must be at least:

____ **Location**

The location of my job must be (examples: no more than thirty miles from my home, remote, in a city, near public transportation):

____ **Schedule**

The schedule of my next job must be (examples: flexible, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., no weekends): _____

____ **Other:** _____

My next job must include:

Exercise: Practice Makes Progress

The key to job interview success is overpreparation. While you can't predict every single question an interviewer will raise, you can anticipate some of the frequently asked ones and be fully prepared to impress with your replies. Here are three of the most common questions and recommendations for answering them. Put your own spin on your answers using these guidelines and then practice, practice, practice:

1. Tell me about yourself and why you want this position.

This deceptively simple question is probably the most important one. You need to concisely make your case for why you and the job in question are a great match. Alyssa Welch, the HR consultant, recommends answering this question in three parts:

- Here's what I know how to do. (Briefly describe your background and skills and how they led you to this moment, a.k.a. your career story.)
- Here's what I'm interested in. (Demonstrate your passion for the type of work this job requires and show off that you've done your homework on the interviewer, role, company, and industry.)
- Here's how I can meet your needs. (Explain how you can achieve the goals of the position—this is again where your research comes in. Demonstrate that you've done your homework through informational interviews, social media channels, and other sources to truly understand how this role fits with the organization's overall mission.)

Remember to keep your answer short—just a couple of minutes—to indicate that you can communicate your story concisely yet effectively.

Finally, if your career story involves a gap or transition in education or employment due to COVID-19, you should be prepared to talk about what you did during that period of time. Did you read more books? Volunteer for a cause you care about? Take care of a family member? I don't believe there are any wrong answers, but I would recommend anticipating that a recruiter might ask about your pandemic experience.

2. What are your biggest strengths?

In your mind, you should interpret this question as “What are your biggest strengths *that match the strengths we asked for in the job description?*” Never forget that you are not making the case for yourself generically; you are making the case for yourself for this specific position. In challenging times like we find ourselves in, you can also use your reply to this question to discuss your adaptability to volatile circumstances.

Be sure to give a specific example of each strength you mention, such as: “One of my biggest strengths is flexibility. When the pandemic first started to spread and I was furloughed from my previous employer, I called all of my favorite local businesses and asked if I could help them with any marketing projects. I ended up assisting businesses in three different industries—a café, a dry cleaner, and an auto-body shop. I’m excited to apply that learning to this marketing manager position.”

3. What are your biggest weaknesses?

Lots of people think the best way to answer this universally disliked question is to take a strength and pretend it’s a weakness: “I am just so punctual. People always complain that I’m early!” or “I’m too much of a workaholic and never quit until a job is complete!” Eye roll. People can see right through those kinds of answers. The better approach is to use this question to demonstrate your growth mindset. Show that you are self-aware enough to know that you are not the best at everything and that you are already taking steps to improve as needed. For example: “One skill I’ve been working on improving is public speaking.

During my time out of the workforce, I joined an online Toastmasters club and signed up to teach a workshop at my church in order to get better at presenting in front of large groups.” Note that this answer does not include, “I’m terrible at public speaking!” Focus on the positive.

I encourage you to search online for additional interview questions to practice answering, particularly questions that are specific to your industry or desired job function. Some larger companies will even provide candidates with sample questions or case studies to help you prepare. Take advantage of it all.



Turn Any Job into a Great Job

**Transform Every Position into an
Opportunity to Build Your Skills, Network,
Self-Awareness, and Future Opportunities**

Exercise: Beef Up the Basics

To accelerate your success in any job situation at any stage, try addressing each of the ten areas above. They don't require any additional education, investment, or connections; all they require is your commitment.

1. Being on Time

What is an upcoming event for which you want to be on time or early? What action will you take to ensure you do so?

2. Making an Effort

Identify a professional situation where you can put in more of an effort. What will you do differently?

3. Being High Energy

At what time of day do you tend to have the highest level of energy? What is one task or activity you can move to that time of day to be happier or more productive at work?

4. Having a Positive Attitude

How can you take a few new positive actions? For example, you can try hanging a mirror in front of your computer to make sure you smile when you answer the phone or log on to a video call. Or commit to stopping or reducing behavior that projects a negative attitude, such as sending critical texts about a colleague.

5. Being Passionate

What is an aspect of your career, industry, or personal interests that you feel passionate about? What is one way you can

add more of that activity or interest to your work, even in a small way?

6. Using Strong Body Language

Take a video of yourself giving a thirty-second presentation. What do you notice about your posture, facial expressions, gestures, voice, or eye movements? What can you improve to be a better presenter and make a better impression on people you interact with?

7. Being Coachable

Take a moment to ask three professional contacts for some actionable advice on any aspect of your job that you'd like to improve. It can be something small like how to respond to a particular client's email or something major like what actions you can take to land a promotion. What is the best advice you received? Write it down, then add the action(s) to your calendar or to-do list, and thank the advice givers twice.

8. Doing a Little Extra

What is one way you can go above and beyond in your job? Can you ask colleagues if they need help on a big project? Comment on the LinkedIn post of an intern you've mentored? Proofread your big presentation one more time?

9. Being Prepared

What are three changes you anticipate seeing in your organization or industry within the next twelve months? What can you do now to be more prepared for them (example: read an article, sign up for a webinar, subscribe to an industry newsletter)?

10. Having a Strong Work Ethic

While not everything is in your control, your work ethic is. Is there an aspect of your job where you know you could be trying harder? Is there more you could do to succeed, but you just haven't made the effort? Write down one action you will take this week to work a little harder than before.
